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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a research study on promotion with reservation, in which students are accountable for their course work and must repeat courses they have failed. Subjects of the study were seventh and eighth grade students at Scenic Junior High School, Oregon. These students failed required courses during the school year 1983-84 and chose among the course repetition options to: (1) repeat the course immediately; (2) wait one semester before repeating the course; (3) attend summer school; (4) repeat with the same instructor; and (5) repeat with a different instructor. Background information is provided on the school curriculum and literature on the subject of in-grade retention. Charts provide information on the failure patterns of the students and the success rate of students who repeated courses. Findings indicated that the success rate of students in summer school was higher than that of students repeating courses during the regular school year. There was little difference in the success rate of students who repeated a course with the same teacher and those who repeated with a different teacher. Some recommendations are made on accommodating the needs of seventh and eighth grade students who fail core courses. (JD)

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# STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY AND COURSE REPETITION

## WHAT WORKS BEST?

A Research Report

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Education

Southern Oregon State College

In Partial Fullfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Science in Education

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by
Joselle Davis Pfeifer
April 1985



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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### THE PROBLEM

Recent nationwide studies call for student accountability and a review and revision of school district promotion and rentention policies. In an effort to meet this public demand and best serve the true interest of the students, Scenic Junior High School implemented a new four step promotion-retention policy in the 1983-84 school year.

1. Promotion With Commendation
2. Promotion With Approval
3. Promotion With Reservation
4. Retention

This paper will deal with step three, promotion with reservation, in which students are accountable for their course work and must repeat courses they have failed. If a Scenic student fails a course he/she has several options for repeating the course: (1) to repeat the course immediately, (2) to wait one semester before repeating the course, (3) to attend summer school, (4) to repeat with the same instructor, (5) to repeat with a different instructor. The question now arises, with which of these options is a student most likely to find success?

This study will attempt to provide organized and relevant objective evidence which can be used to improve administrative and student decisions about the repetition of courses. Since Scenic implemented a new curriculum in the 1983-84 school year, the students who failed required courses during that year and chose among the course repetition

options available will be the population of study.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

ABILITY LEVEL PLACEMENTS: Math students are placed according to their anticipated math ability in one of eight levels of math ranging from ERC math to geometry. Students do not take two levels of math at one time in an effort to make up a failed math course.

ACCOUNTABILITY: The concept that students should be held responsible for completing and passing required grade level work.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLING: Any school other than a regular junior high, including Jackson County ESD alternative school, correctional facilities, foster care or shelter care situations, hearing impaired programs, STEPS or ERC programs.

BASIC SKILLS COURSE: A special course at Scenic designed primarily for 9th grade students who have demonstrated learning problems. Credit is given.

COMPUTERIZED RECORDS: Student records obtained from the computer of District #6, including failure lists, transcrips and GPA records.

DROP: A student who left Scenic for whatever reason, lack of attendance, transfer, or placement in an alternative school outside of the district where comparative records are not available.

ERC: An educational resource center provided for students who have been identified as learning disabled. Students are placed in low level ERC math, English, and reading programs for credit.

ELECTIVES: Courses chosen by the students such as art, music, etc. 7th and 8th grade students have three semester electives per year.

GUIDED ELECTIVE PROGRAM: A non graded junior high program in which students selected courses within a specified plan. The program being based on nine week courses which students selected because of interest, ability and need.

IEP: Individual Educational Programs are written for learning or behavior disabled students. Placement in special courses such as basic skills, ERC or speech communication courses are mandatory, if written as part of an IEP.

LAB COURSES: Remedial courses in required course areas such as English, math, health, social studies, and science. Students cover the same content area but work with different activities and at a different level than that of the regular required courses.

MDT: Multiple Disciplinary Team is a group of faculty members who meet weekly to discuss students with problems and determine the best placement or course of action for each student.

POPULATION OF STUDY: 7th and 8th grade students who failed required courses during the 1983-84 school year at Scenic Junior High School and attended summer school 1984 or returned to Scenic and repeated courses in the first semester of the 1984-85 school year.

PROMOTION WITH COMMENDATION: Students who achieve a grade point average of 3.5 or better would be promoted to the next grade level with commendation noted both on the report card and in the form of a certificate.

PROMOTION WITH APPROVAL: To proceed to the next grade level.

PROMOTION WITH RESERVATION: To be allowed to advance to the next grade level with the understanding that the student will repeat any required course which they have failed.

REPEATED COURSES: Required courses that are taken over with the intent of gaining a passing grade and completing a credit for that grade level.

REQUIRED COURSES: English, health, science, social studies, and math are required courses and must be taken at grade level each year.

RETENTION: To keep a student at the same grade level for a second year.

SEMESTER: A grading period of 18 to 20 weeks or one half of the school year.

SUMMER SCHOOL: A remedial summer school runs for eight weeks in June, July, and August. Courses are remedial in nature and do not parallel the regular planned course statements of courses taught in the regular school year. District #6 Summer School is provided only for secondary students.

TRANSCRIPT: A computerized record showing courses, grades and competencies earned by secondary students.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH SETTING

## METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH SETTING

In an effort to discover successful repetition patterns, the researcher reviewed all Scenic computerized grade records for summer school 1984, and the first semester of the 1984-85 school year. The population identified was students who failed required courses during the first semester of the 1983-84 school year, particularly those who remained at Scenic and repeated courses. Results were then charted and conclusions were drawn from the research findings. The purpose of the study was to help Scenic administrators and counselors determine successful student patterns in the repetition of failed courses so that they would be able to better guide students in the process of repeating courses.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the 1983-84 school year a new curriculum was initiated which was sequentially based and grade level oriented. Students were divided by grade level and required to take specified departmentalized courses in English, health, science, math and social studies. Student choices were limited to the elective areas of music, home economics, industrial arts, drama, etc.

The initial reaction to switching from a non-graded, guided elective program to a traditional, sequential program, was an increase in student failure rate. Looking back, the failures may have been due to

any one of a number of reasons including (1) implementing a new curriculum in which expectation levels were too high, (2) teaching new curriculum with all new textbooks, (3) having only one level of each course, with no specific allowances for high, average or low achievers, or (4) student resentment because they were automatically placed in required courses rather than being allowed to select their courses and teachers.

In the previous junior high program, credits were accumulated and retention took place only at the end of the ninth grade year. With the new curriculum the failure problem had to be addressed in terms of what type of student accountability should be implemented at each grade level. Thus, a new four step promotion/retention policy was devised.

1. Promotion With Commendation
2. Promotion With Approval
3. Promotion With Reservation
4. Retention

(A copy of the complete policy can be found in the Appendix.)

During the 1984-85 school year Scenic implemented the Promotion With Reservation Phase by having eighth and ninth grade students repeat required courses they failed the previous year. Students who did not attend summer school must give up their elective choices in order to repeat failed courses during the regular school year. A maximum of two semester courses can be made up in any one semester or in summer school.

LIMITATIONS OF PHASE 3: PROMOTION WITH RESERVATION

Scenic has found that total student accountability and enforcement of the Promotion With Reservation Phase is not always possible. A number of factors limit the administrator's ability to see that all students re-

peat all failed required courses. The intent of the policy and the best interest of the students become the ultimate guidelines.

After one year of working with the policy, the staff has agreed that: (1) no student will be asked to repeat more than two courses per semester, (2) no student will be required to repeat a course more than once even if failed the second time, (3) failures are to be made up the year following the failure or in summer school, (4) seventh grade failures would not follow a student into the ninth grade year.

While examining the problems of student repetition of courses, one must first look at the structure of the required courses and the daily schedule, keeping in mind students can take seven courses per day per grading period.

8th grade requirements:

| | |
|---|---|
| English | (1 full year) |
| Math | (1 full year) |
| Science | (1 full year) |
| Social Studies | (1 full year) |
| PE | (1 full year) |
| Health | (1/2 year) |
| Electives | (3 semesters / year) |

It is apparent that an 8th grader could only make up 3 semester credits in one full school year, doing this by eliminating all elective choices.

9th grade requirements:

| | |
|---|---|
| English | (1 full year) |
| Math | (1 full year) |
| Science | (1 full year) |
| Social Studies | (1 full year) |
| Electives | (6 semesters / year) |

The elective choice possibilities in the ninth grade year make strict enforcement possible. However, administrators must keep in mind that repeated eighth grade course credits cannot be used for credits toward graduation, thus the benefits of repeating are for mastery learning and accountability. The disadvantages of eighth grade course repetition are the loss of usable high school credits and the fact that high school credits needed for graduation have not been attained in periods where eightn grade classes were taken. In analyzing the situation one readily sees that ninth graders cannot keep up with their classmates when repetition is necessary. Summer school seems like the best possible choice for them.

Other limitations are that IEP students may need to be enrolled in special courses which take up elective choices, thus eliminating the possibility of course repetition. Students with unusual personal problems may also need to be granted an elective or a study lab period.

Teacher availability must also be considered. When classroom enrollment is pushed to 30, 31, and 32 students per teacher, the welfare of all students must be weighed against the benefits of a few students repeating for accountability's sake. Hiring more teachers is not the answer for Scenic as we do not have rooms to accomodate additional course sections.

The administrative bookwork of keeping tabs on failures and repetition of courses is overwhelming. Our school has a history of 30 to 33% attrition in enrollment each year. It is not possible to track the pro-

gress of all students as many drop out of school or transfer to another district.

The course repetition policy has been in effect for two semesters. The successes and shortcomings of this policy are examined in the data in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

HISTORICAL MOVEMENTS:

Historically, public education has responded to public priorities and needs by adjusting curriculum and policies. Emphasis in the area of retention and promotion policies has changed over the years. Much of the early research in the area of grade retention concluded with the premise that children with learning problems did not benefit from grade retention and that retention cast a shadow on their self-esteem. A definite swing in education occurred after some of these research reports were published. Eighth grade testing for promotion to high school was generally dropped, and retention was replaced by a new policy which became known as "social promotion."

Much of the primary retention research done in the 30's, 40's and 50's has little relevance for today's school population. In the past few years public education has accepted a new challenge and has provided mainstreaming and equal access for all children. Along with this movement, schools have instituted many curriculum changes. Additions to the traditional 3 R's have been the inclusion of special education programs and a wide variety of courses which are designed to meet the needs and ability levels of all children, not just the educationally elite.

The school population at Scenic is diversified and our curriculum

reflects the needs of our special students. Scenic houses the Jackson County Junior High Program for Hearing Impaired, has a Chapter I program, an ERC program, and special remedial laboratory courses in required areas. These kinds of programs meet the needs of our special students and have eliminated the general need for total retention, but not for single course accountability.

CURRENT INFLUENCES

Early in the 1980's a new nationwide movement came into focus in the area of school and student accountability. In brief, the reports which seem most influential in the accountability area were summarized by Johnson as follows:

> The Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, 1983, stated that grade to grade promotion should be based on mastery learning, not age.
>
> The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, stated that promotion and graduation policies should be guided by the academic progress of students and their instructional needs, rather than by rigid adherence to age.
>
> The National Science Board, 1983, concluded that schools should curtail the process of social promotion and that every state and school district should establish rigorous standards of grade promotion.

In the wake of this national outcry, administrators are struggling with the entire retention/promotion phase of student and school accountability and subject mastery. Many of us are seeking alternatives to the traditional concepts of in-grade retention, promotion, and social promotion.

ALTERNATIVES TO IN-GRADE RETENTION

One alternative to retention is suggested in the article "Schools Without Failure." Powell looks at failure with an entirely different view. He suggests that attitudes, not policies about failure, must be examined. He contends that failure, grading, and retention are educational traditions which must be changed and that failures can no longer be accepted. He recommends a grading system of A, B, C, and Incomplete. With this plan, students would not fail or be given a "D"; however, they would not be promoted to high school until all I's had been completed. This type of system would allow students to progress to the next grade, but would hold the student accountable for completion of all assignments. In his proposal, an "I" class would be part of the schedule for each student who received an incomplete. The student would remain in the "I" class until all work was made up. This approach certainly is better than complete retention and does speak to the earlier research which claimed that in-grade retention did not produce increased student achievement. This concept is similar to course repetition except that the student does not ever get a "D" or an "F" grade.

Course repetition has been a standard practice in high schools in the State of Oregon for many years, as this was the only way students could make up credits for graduation. Unfortunately, the Department of Education for the State of Oregon indicated that they did not maintain any statistics on repetition of secondary level courses.

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The only available research directly dealing with student success and grades earned in repeated courses was done with college students. Counts, DeClure and Pace tested six hypotheses and were able to conclude that in general, students who repeated courses were more successful (1) when additional semesters intervened before repeating courses and (2) that with new instructors students had a better chance of passing and attaining higher grades.

THE RETENTION DILEMMA

It seems fitting and proper to quote Johnson as we conclude this discussion on promotion and retention policies:

> "The promotion/retention issue seems murky at best. The issue is especially colored when it becomes a political rather than an educational decision. If the behavior of educational leaders and state legislators persists along current trends, the issue may degenerate into yet another instance where radical surgery is performed to treat the symptom, rather than considering therapy to deal with the problem. To enforce accountability regulations by holding the child in grade seems to ignore the question of how effective the instruction was for that child."

Many of the studies in the 1980's on retention and the "get tough" approach for accountability have concluded by noting that few students gain from total in-grade retention. Social immaturity of a student who has a normal I.Q. seems to be the only logical reason for expecting retention to be successful. Therefore, alternatives to retention must be found. Course repetition just may be the right answer.

SCENIC RETENTION POLICY REVIEW

Before Fall term 1983, Scenic Junior High had a retention policy which retained students at the end of the 9th grade year if they had not attained sufficient credits in required and elective areas, However, the benefit to the student was questionable. It was felt that an alternative to total retention needed to be developed. Although District #6 administrators had little prior research data or experience base on which to rely, a new policy was developed in the promotion/retention area for junior high students. Promotion With Reservation was the suggested solution for course accountability. This phase, which includes repetition of courses, has been implemented and we have felt a great need for a follow up study to see how this new approach affected our students.

As the administrator in charge of implementing the Promotion With Reservation phase of Scenic's new promotion/retention policy, I felt concerned with the apparent power I was exerting over students. My greatest concern was that repetition would further increase failures, frustrations and the drop out rate. I felt almost compelled to research the student records to determine what actually was happening with course repetitions and the success/failure patterns therein formed. Questions which I had to answer included:

1) What were the failure patterns of 7th and 8th grade students during the 1983-84 school year?

2) Were students who repeated courses successful?

3) Were students with high failure rates successful when repeating courses in summer school?

4) Were students successful when giving up an elective to repeat failed required courses?

5) Did students find more success by repeating with the same teacher or with a different teacher?

6) Was there a certain type of student who experienced failures?

7) Did GPA's fall when students had to drop elective choices to repeat failed courses?

With these questions in mind, this researcher gathered together the computerized records for all Scenic students who had experienced failures in required courses. The research procedure and results are reported in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER IV

EVALUATION OF DATA

## EVALUATION OF DATA

In an effort to answer my administrative questions and gain factual information about Scenic students who failed required courses and then repeated said courses, a series of charts were made.

All computerized records of students who failed courses during first semester of the 1984-85 school year were studied. Results of credits earned through the course repetition process in summer school and first semester of 1985 are reported herein. The charts are prepared for easy comparison purposes. The researcher included the entire failure record for first semester of 1983 and 1984, so that a more accurate picture of the student's scholastic progress could be examined. Grade point averages are also charted for comparison. Student numbers were assigned and the complete records of each student may be obtained for the purpose of future research by contacting Scenic Junior High, Central Point, Oregon. The questions to be answered in this study concern the success of students repeating courses and whether there are any discernible patterns which should influence the choices future students make in the repetition process.

Charts #1 and #2 will answer two questions:

(1) What were the failure patterns of 7th and 8th grade students during the 1983-84 school year?

(2) Were students who repeated courses successful?

7th GRADE FAILURE PATTERN IN 83-84

# Chart 1

KEY: △ Student dropped school

ERC Student placed in alternative courses

◯ Student repeated course with grade indicated

X Indicates subject areas failed

| | ENGLISH | HEALTH | SCIENCE | SOCIAL STUDIES | MATH | PE | ELECTIVES |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | X | | (X)C | X | | XX | X |
| 2 | (ERC) | X | X | X | | | X |
| 3 | | | | (X)F | | XX | XXX |
| 4 △ | | | | X | | | |
| 5 △ | | | | X | X F | X | |
| 6 △ | | | | (X)C | | | |
| 7 | (X)D | | | | (X)D (2nd Sem SS) | | |
| 8 △ | | X | X | X | X | X | |
| 9 | | | | | | | |
| 10 | (ERC) | X | X | X | | | |
| 11 | (TR back to Hanby) | | | X | X C | | |
| 12 △ | | | X | | | | X |
| 13 △ | | | | X | | | |
| 14 △ | (To Hedrick) | | | | | | |
| 15 △ | | | | X | | | |
| 16 | | | D | X | (X)C | X | |
| 17 | | | | | (X)C | | |
| 18 | (ERC) | | X | X | | | |
| 19 | | | (X)C | (X)F | | | X |
| 20 | (ERC) | | (X)D | (X)C | | | X |
| 22 | | | | (X)C (Lab) | | | |
| 23 | | | | (X)D (Lab) | | | |
| 24 | | | | (X)F | | | |
| 25 | (X)C | | | | | | XX |
| 26 △ | | X | | X | X | | |
| 27 | | | | (X)C Lab | | X | |
| 28 | | | | X | (X)D | | XX |
| 30 | X | | | | | XX | X |
| 31 | | | (X)D | | | | |
| 32 | (X)B | | | | X F | | |
| 33 | | | | (X)C | | | |
| 34 | | | | | X D | | |
| | 3 | 0 | 5 | 9 | | | # of repeats attempted |
| | 3 | 0 | 5 | 6 | | | # of repeats passed |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | | | # of repeats failed |

Chart #1 indicates the failure pattern of 7th grade students in the 1983-84 school year. Note that 31 7th graders failed English, health, science or social studies; 17 course repetitions were attempted. Three courses were failed the second time, 14 courses were passes, showing an 82% success rate. Further examination reveals that students who failed math the first year and did not repeat in summer school were placed in math courses first semester according to their anticipated math ability level, and those students had reasonable success.



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In Chart #2 one can determine that 40 8th grade students took English, health, science or social studies over, repeating a total of 54 courses. Forty courses were passed and fourteen courses were failed the second time. In other words, 74% of the repeated courses were passed.

# Chart 2

8th GRADE FAILURE PATTERN 1983-84

| | ENGLISH | HEALTH | SCIENCE | SOCIAL STUDIES | MATH | PE | ELECTIVES |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | (X) C | | | | (X) C | | |
| 2 | | | | (X) A | | | |
| 3 | | | | (X) B | X D | | |
| 4 △ | | X | | X | X | | XX |
| 5 △ | X | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | (X) B | | | |
| 7 | | | | X | X | | |
| 8 | | | | (X) A Lab | | | |
| 9 | X | X | | X | X A | X | X |
| 10 | (X) C | | | | | | |
| 11 | (X) B | (X) A | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | X B | | XX |
| 13 | (X) F | | | (X) F | | X | |
| 14 | (X) F | | | | | | |
| 15 | | | | (X) C | | | |
| 16 | (X) B | | | | X C | X | |
| 17 | | X | | | | | |
| 18 | (X) C | | | | | | |
| 19 | | (X) F B | | X D | (X) D | | |
| 20 | | X | | X | X C | | |
| 21 | | (X) D | | | | XX | X |
| 22 | (X) B | | | (X) D | | | |
| 23 | | (X) C | | | X D | | |
| 24 △ | | X | | | X | | X |
| 25 | (X) C | | | | | | X |
| 26 △ | | | X | X | X | | |
| 27 | (X) B | | | | | | |
| 28 | (X) F | (X) F D | | | | | |
| 29 △ | | | | X | | | |
| 30 | | | | (X) C | (X) D | | |
| 31 | | | | (X) B | | | |
| 33 | (X) C | | | | | | |
| 46 △ | | | X | X | X | | |

KEY: △ Student dropped school

ERC Student placed in alternative courses

◯ Student repeated course with grade indicated

X Indicates subject areas failed

## 8TH GRADE FAILURE PATTERN 1983-84 (CONTINUED)

| | ENGLISH | HEALTH | SCIENCE | SOCIAL STUDIES | MATH | PE | ELECTIVES |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 35 | (trans to Crater) | | | X | X | | |
| 36 | | | | X | X C | X | |
| 37 | (X) D | X | | X | | | |
| 38 | X | | X | | X F | XX | |
| 39 | | | | | X D | | |
| 40 | (X) F | X | (X) F | X | (X) F | XX | XX |
| 41 | | (X) C | | (X) F | X D | | |
| 42 | | | | X | | | |
| 43 | (trans to Crater) | | | | | | |
| 44 | | | | X | X | XX | XX |
| 45 | | | | (X) D | X D | X | |
| 46 | | | | (X) F | | X | |
| 47 | | | | (X) D | | | |
| 48 | | (X) B | | (X) B | | | |
| 49 | | | | (X) C | | | XX |
| 50 | | | | | X | | |
| 51 | X | | | | | | |
| 52 | | X | | | | XX | X |
| 53 | (ESD ALTERNATIVE SCH) | | | | X | | |
| 54 | (ESD ALTERNATIVE SCH) | | | X | | XX | |
| 55 | | | | | X | | |
| 56 | | | X | (X) C | (X) C | | |
| 57 | | | | (X) F | | | X |
| 58 | | | | (X) F | | | X |
| 59 | (X) A | | | (X) C | | | |
| 60 | (X) A | | (X) A | | | X | X |
| 61 | (X) F | | | (X) F | | XX | X |
| 62 | | | | (X) A Lab | | | |
| 63 | | | | X | X | XX | |
| 64 | | | | (X) A | (B) SS (2nd Sem.) | | X |
| 65 | | (X) A | | (X) B | | | X |
| 66 | | | | | X C | X | |
| 67 | | (X) C | | | | | |
| | 17 | 11 | 2 | 24 | # of repeats attempted | | |
| | 12 | 9 | 1 | 18 | # of repeats passed | | |
| | 5 | 2 | 1 | 6 | # of repeats failed | | |

Twelve 8th graders who failed math and did not repeat math in summer school returned to Scenic the following year and were placed by ability level. Eleven passed math; one failed math for the second year.

Considering the results of both charts 1 and 2 it can be seen that 38 of the 101 students who failed solid required courses also failed physical education or electives. 37.6% of the students had failures in both required and elective areas. 62.4% of these students did not fail courses in the elective areas.



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Charts #1 and #2 were designed to answer my first question, "Can students successfully make up failed courses?" The results were positive showing 74% of the repeated courses were passed. After determining that students do have success when repeating courses, it seemed important to compare the success rate in summer school against the success rate during the regular school year. According to our promotion policy, courses may be made up by attending a remedial summer school or by repeating failed courses the following school year. It should be noted that no student would be able to repeat more than two courses in any one semester or during summer school.

Students who failed two or more required courses in the school year were encouraged to attend summer school which is organized on a remedial basis. The question needed to be answered as to whether summer school was a successful experience for students with high failure rates. Chart #3 clearly illustrates the results of all 7th and 8th grade courses repeated and credits earned during summer school 1984.

Chart #3 answers the questions:

Were students with high failure rates successful when repeating courses in summer school?

# Chart 3

NUMBER OF REPEATED COURSES SHOWING NEW GRADE

SUMMER SCHOOL

| SUBJECT | A | B | C | D | F | TOTALS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ENGLISH 7 | | B B | [C] [C] | | | 4 passes<br>0 failures |
| GEOGRAPHY 7 | | | | D | | 1 passes<br>0 failures |
| SCIENCE 7 | | | C | D | F | 2 passes<br>1 failures |
| MATH | [A] [A] A | [B] | C C | D | | 7 passes<br>0 failures |
| ENGLISH 8 | A A | B B B<br>B B | | | | 7 passes<br>0 failures |
| HEALTH 8 | A A | B B | | | | 4 passes<br>0 failures |
| SCIENCE 8 | A | | | | | 1 passes<br>0 failures |
| WORLD CULTURES 8 | A | B B B | C C<br>C C | D D | | 10 passes<br>0 failures |
| MATH | | B [B] | [C] [C]<br>C C | D | | 7 passes<br>0 failures |
| TOTALS BY GRADE EARNED | 9 A's | 15 B's | 13 C's | 6 D's | 1 F | |

[ ] = Grade Earned For a Second Semester Failure

Eleven 7th grade students attended summer school in 1984-85 and successfully completed a total of 14 semester course credits. Twenty 8th grade students attended summer school and successfully completed 29 semester course credits. There was only one failure. The lack of failures may be accounted for by the fact that very strict attendance and discipline policies are enforced; problem students are dropped without being assigned a failing grade. The final conclusion regarding summer school is that students did have a good experience and most students received A, B, or C grades. 81.8% of the grades were C or above. 15.9% of the grades were below an average C.

Summer school was a successful experience for the majority of students. Now we needed to compare this repetition success with the success rate of students who repeated courses during first semester.

For students who did not attend summer school the alternative became repetition of the failed course during the 1984-85 school year. A concern of mine, with this option, was whether or not students who were required to give up electives and repeat failed courses would experience even more failure. I was also concerned about making proper placement of students and wondered if there would be more success by repeating with the same teacher or repeating with a different teacher. Chart #4 was prepared with the idea of graphically showing the exact success or failure pattern for first semester repetitions.

When a course is repeated during the regular school year, students are simultaneously taking two levels of that course at the same time. A typical repetition pattern could be:

Repeating 7th English and taking 8th English
Repeating 7th Health and taking 8th Health
Repeating 7th Science and taking 8th Science
or Repeating 7th Geography and taking 8th World Cultures

The second option for course repetition came during the first semester of the 1984-85 school year. The records of students who did not attend summer school were reviewed. Nine students were placed in alternative school situations. Twenty-three students had dropped out of school. The record of the 34 students who repeated courses first semester are shown in Chart #4. The circled grades indicate that the student earned the grade while repeating with a different teacher.

Chart #4 answers two questions:

(1) Were students successful when giving up an elective to repeat failed required courses?

(2) Did students find more success by repeating with the same teacher or with a different teacher?

By examining 1st semester's repetition chart, one can see some interesting facts. A total of 34 students repeated 7th and 8th grade courses in four required areas during the fall semester of 1984-85. Two students repeated health for the second time before passing. Five students were placed in remedial lab courses rather than repeating the original level failed. Results in lab courses were very positive. In regular sections 19 students received B's, C's and D's. Twelve students failed courses for the second time.

# Chart 4

NUMBER OF REPEATED COURSES SHOWING NEW GRADE

FIRST SEMESTER 1984-85

| SUBJECT | A | B | C | D | F | TOTALS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ENGLISH 7 | | | (C) | | | 1 passes<br>0 failures |
| HEALTH 7 | | | | | | |
| SCIENCE 7 | | | (C) | (D) | | 2 passes<br>0 failures |
| GEOGRAPHY 7 | | (B) | (C)<br>C | D | (F)<br>(F) | 4 passes<br>2 failures |
| ENGLISH 8 | | | (C) (C)<br>C C | (D) | F<br>(F) (F) | 5 passes<br>3 failures |
| HEALTH 8 | | | C<br>C<br>C | D<br>D | F<br>F | 5 passes<br>2 failures |
| SCIENCE 8 | | | | | | passes<br>failures |
| WORLD CULTURES 8 | A Lab<br>(A Lab)<br>(A Lab) | (B Lab) | | (D)<br>D | F Lab F<br>F (F) (F) | 6 passes<br>6 failures |
| TOTALS BY GRADES EARNED | 3 A's | 2 B's | 11 C's | 7 D's | 13 F's | |

(○) Grade earned with different teacher

When addressing the question of success with the same or different teachers the results show:

7 failures with a different 7th grade teacher
0 failures with the same 7th grade teacher

11 passes with a different 8th grade teacher
13 passes with the same 8th grade teacher

Generally, there was no difference indicated at this particular time whether a student was more successful when repeating with a new teacher or repeating with the same teacher.

Charts 3 and 4 answered several of my questions. Students were successful in summer school and generally earned higher grades than the students who repeated courses first semester. Students who gave up electives to repeat failed required courses were not as successful in terms of grades earned as were those students who attended summer school. There was no apparent difference in grades earned by students who repeated with a different teacher as compared to those repeating with the same teacher.

At this point in the research, it seemed important to take a look at the student's GPA's and compare their overall progress in the repetition cycle.

Carts #5 and #6 answer two questions:

1) Was there a certain type of student who experienced failures?

2) Did GPA's fall when students were required to drop elective choices and repeat failed required courses?

The final questions which needed to be addressed centered around the individual success or failure patterns and the grade point average earned. Two basic questions came to mind: 1) Would GPA's fall if students were required to drop elective choices and repeat failed required courses? 2) Was there a certain type of student who experienced failures of required courses? Charts 5 and 6 were prepared so that a comparison could be made of the students' GPA and the number of courses they failed first semester for two consecutive years. Generally speaking, very few seventh or eighth grade students who failed required courses had a 2.00 GPA. This fact alone points out that most students repeating courses were low achievers.

Chart 5 deals with the failure patterns and GPA's of seventh grade students. Of the 34 students who failed required courses in the first semester of 83-84 only two earned a 2.00 GPA. However, in the following year nine students improved their grades and made a 2.00 GPA or better. When dealing strictly with those students who repeated courses I found the following:

14 students repeated courses
10 students attained a better GPA
4 students had a lower GPA

Column 3 shows the differences or changes in GPA's from 83-84 to 84-85.

Gains: 16 students acquired a total of 10.274 grade points for an average gain of .642

Losses: 6 students lost 3.063 grade points for an average GPA loss of .511

These figures indicate a substantial gain in student GPA's even though students had given up their electives and repeated required courses.

Of the 22 students who returned to Scenic in 84-85:

14 students did not fail any required courses
5 students failed more required courses in 84-85
2 students failed the same number of courses as the previous year

# Chart 5

COMPARATIVE GPA'S AND COURSES FAILED

| | 83-84 1st Sem GPA Grade 7 | 84-85 1st Sem Grade 8 | Difference or Change In GPA | 83-84 # of Req. Failed | 84-85 # of Req. Failed | Gain or Loss | 83-84 # of Elec. and P.E. Failed | 84-85 # of Elec. and P.E. Failed | Gain or Loss |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | .615 | 2.714 | + 2.099 | 2 | 0 | ↑ | 3 | 0 | ↑ |
| 2 | 1.071 | 2.083 | + 1.012 | 3 | 0 | ↑ | 1 | 0 | ↑ |
| 3 | .923 | .333 | - .590 | 1 | 5 | ↓ | 5 | 2 | ↑ |
| 4 | 1.286 | | | 1 | | | 0 | | |
| 5 | .643 | | | 2 | 5 | ↓ | 1 | 4 | ↓ |
| 6 | 1.545 | .345 | - 1.200 | 1 | 5 | ↓ | 0 | 1 | ↓ |
| 7 | 1.429 | 2.143 | + .714 | 2 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | |
| 8 | .615 | | | 4 | | | 1 | | |
| 9 | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | .786 | 1.750 | + .964 | 3 | 1 | ↑ | 0 | 1 | ↓ |
| 11 | 2.500 | | | 2 | | | 0 | | |
| 12 | 1.692 | | | 1 | | | 1 | | |
| 13 | 1.182 | | | 1 | | | | | |
| 14 | .400 (Retained) (Drop) | | | | | | (Retained) | | |
| 15 | 1.929 | | | 1 | | | 0 | | |
| 16 | 1.286 | 1.000 | - .286 | 2 | 2 | — | 1 | 2 | ↓ |
| 17 | 1.143 | 2.071 | + .928 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 18 | 1.917 | 2.000 | + .083 | 2 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 1 | ↓ |
| 19 | 1.000 | 1.615 | + .615 | 2 | 0 | ↑ | 1 | 0 | ↑ |
| 20 | 1.571 | 1.714 | + .143 | 2 | 0 | ↑ | 1 | 1 | — |
| 22 | 1.571 | 2.083 | + .512 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 1 | ↓ |
| 23 | 1.769 | 1.625 | - .144 | 1 | 1 | — | 0 | 1 | ↓ |
| 24 | 1.357 | 1.071 | - .286 | 1 | 2 | ↓ | 0 | 1 | ↓ |
| 25 | 1.462 | 2.571 | + 1.109 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 2 | 0 | ↑ |
| 26 | | | | 3 | | | | | |
| 27 | 1.000 | 1.500 | + .500 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 1 | 2 | ↓ |
| 28 | 1.500 | 1.545 | + .045 | 2 | 0 | ↑ | 2 | 1 | ↑ |
| 29 | (Grade change) | | | | | | | | |
| 30 | 1.357 | .800 | - .557 | 1 | 2 | ↓ | 3 | 1 | ↑ |
| 31 | 1.500 | 1.917 | + .417 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 32 | 1.071 | 1.500 | + .429 | 2 | 1 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 33 | 2.143 | 2.231 | + .088 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 34 | 1.538 | 2.154 | + .616 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |

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Chart #6 compares the GPA's and failure patterns of the class of '88 who were 8th graders at the time the first failures occurred. Of the 67 eighth grade students who failed required courses first semester of the 1983-84 school year, only five had a 2.00 GPA or above. Again, this fact alone points out that generally speaking the students repeating courses were low achievers.

In comparing GPA's from first semester 1983-84 (8th grade year) with first semester 1984-85 (9th grade year) some interesting facts were seen:

25 students attained higher GPA's
16 students received lower GPA's

23 students did not fail any other required courses in 84-85
4 students failed one course, which was the same failure rate
6 students improved their record and had fewer failures
6 students failed more required courses in 84-85

Looking at one more pattern, the pass/failure rate in electives was examined. Note that all elective and physical education courses were taught and graded on a nine week basis, therefore at first glance the failure numbers may seem high. A "4" would indicate a student failed four nine week courses or an equivalent of two semester courses in the required area. Looking at the elective figures:

30 students did not have any failures in electives in 84-85
7 had fewer failures, thus improving
23 remained the same

Among the other students who had failures:
5 students showed fewer failures
7 showed more failures
2 had the same number of failures



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From the figures in Charts 5 and 6 one would have to acknowledge that the gains are slightly more than the failures. Speculation on the reasons for the gains might include: 1) students are taking school more seriously as they know that they will have to repeat failed required courses, 2) age and maturity help, 3) students do not like to repeat courses with younger students at a different grade level.

# Chart 6

COMPARATIVE GPA'S AND COURSES FAILED

| | 83-84 1st Sem GPA Grade 8 | 84-85 1st Sem GPA Grade 9 | Difference or Change in GPA | 83-84 # of Req. Failed | 84-85 # of Req. Failed | Gain or Loss | 83-84 # of Elec. and P.E. Failed | 84-85 # of Elec. and P.E. Failed | Gain or Loss |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | .929 | | | 2 | | | 0 | | |
| 2 | 1.462 | 2.833 | + 1.371 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 3 | 1.714 | 2.385 | + .672 | 2 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 4 | .786 | | | 3 | | | 2 | | |
| 5 | 1.500 | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | 1.857 | 1.818 | - .039 | 1 | 1 | — | 0 | 0 | — |
| 7 | .778 | | | 2 | | | 0 | | |
| 8 | 2.071 | 3.333 | + 1.262 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 9 | .857 | .929 | + .072 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 10 | 1.857 | 2.571 | + .714 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 11 | 1.214 | 1.571 | + .357 | 2 | 1 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 12 | 1.143 | 1.923 | + .780 | 1 | 1 | — | 2 | 1 | ↑ |
| 13 | 1.000 | .385 | - .615 | 2 | 1 | ↑ | 1 | 4 | ↓ |
| 14 | 1.357 | .786 | - .571 | 1 | 3 | ↓ | 0 | 1 | ↓ |
| 15 | 1.500 | 1.800 | + .300 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 1 | ↓ |
| 16 | .857 | 1.417 | + .560 | 2 | 0 | ↑ | 1 | 0 | ↑ |
| 17 | 1.143 | | | 1 | | | 0 | | |
| 18 | 1.714 | 1.500 | - .214 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 2 | ↓ |
| 19 | 1.000 | 1.182 | + .182 | 3 | 1 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | - |
| 20 | 1.214 | 2.077 | + .863 | 3 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 2 | ↓ |
| 21 | .929 | 1.636 | + .707 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 3 | 1 | ↑ |
| 22 | 1.929 | 1.000 | - .929 | 2 | 0 | ↑ | 2 | 0 | ↑ |
| 23 | 1.583 | 2.400 | + .817 | 2 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 24 | .692 | | | 2 | | | 0 | | |
| 25 | 1.643 | 2.538 | + .895 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 1 | 0 | ↑ |
| 26 | .250 | | | 3 | | | 0 | | |
| 27 | 1.429 | 1.462 | + .033 | 1 | 2 | ↓ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 28 | 1.500 | .714 | - .786 | 2 | 4 | ↓ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 29 | 2.071 | | | 1 | | | 0 | | |
| 30 | 1.429 | 1.200 | - .229 | 2 | 1 | ↑ | 0 | 1 | ↓ |
| 31 | 1.500 | 2.750 | +1.25 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 32 | | | | | | | | | |
| 33 | 1.929 | 2.500 | + .571 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 34 | 1.214 | | | 3 | | | 0 | | |



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| | 83-84 1st Sem GPA Grade 8 | 84-85 1st Sem GPA Grade 9 | Difference or Change in GPA | 83-84 # of Req. Failed | 84-85 # of Req. Failed | Gain or Loss | 83-84 # of Elec. and P.E. Failed | 84-85 # of Elec. and P.E. Failed | Gain or Loss |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 35 | Past record not available Tr. | | | | | | | | |
| 36 | 1.571 | 1.182 | - .389 | 2 | 1 | ↑ | 1 | 2 | ↓ |
| 37 | .929 | 2.143 | +1.214 | 3 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 38 | .462 | .231 | - .231 | 3 | 4 | ↓ | 5 | 3 | ↑ |
| 39 | 2.286 | 2.214 | - .072 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 40 | Retained | | | 5 | 3 | ↑ | 4 | 3 | ↑ |
| 41 | 1.000 | 1.000 | .000 | 3 | 1 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 42 | 1.615 | .636 | + .979 | 1 | 4 | ↓ | 1 | 1 | — |
| 43 | 2.571 | | | 1 | | | 0 | | |
| 44 | .583 | | | 2 | 3 | ↓ | 4 | 3 | ↑ |
| 45 | .727 | 2.250 | +1.523 | 2 | 0 | ↑ | 1 | 0 | ↑ |
| 46 | 1.786 | 1.385 | + .398 | 1 | 2 | ↓ | 1 | 2 | ↓ |
| 47 | 2.231 | 2.214 | - .017 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 1 | ↓ |
| 48 | 1.429 | 2.000 | + .571 | 2 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 49 | 1.429 | 1.545 | + .116 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 2 | 0 | ↑ |
| 50 | 1.643 | | | 1 | | | 2 | | |
| 51 | 1.100 | | | 1 | | | 0 | | |
| 52 | 1.000 | 1.857 | + .857 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 3 | 0 | ↑ |
| 53 | 1.667 | | | 1 | | | 0 | | |
| 54 | .929 | | | 1 | | | 2 | | |
| 55 | 1.364 | | | 1 | | | 1 | | |
| 56 | .833 | | | 3 | | | 0 | | |
| 57 | .846 | | | 1 | 5 | ↓ | 1 | | |
| 58 | 1.667 | | | 1 | 2 | ↓ | 1 | 1 | — |
| 59 | 1.565 | 1.917 | + .352 | 2 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 60 | .714 | 1.214 | + .500 | 2 | 2 | — | 2 | 0 | ↑ |
| 61 | .786 | .200 | - .586 | 2 | 4 | ↓ | 3 | 0 | ↑ |
| 62 | 1.385 | 3.714 | +2.329 | 1 | 0 | ↑ | 0 | 0 | — |
| 63 | .692 | | | 1 | | | 2 | | |
| 64 | 1.538 | 1.333 | - .205 | 2 | 1 | ↑ | 1 | 0 | ↑ |
| 65 | 1.462 | 1.154 | - .308 | 2 | 3 | ↓ | 1 | 2 | ↓ |
| 66 | .909 | 1.923 | +1.014 | 1 | 1 | — | 1 | 0 | ↑ |
| 67 | 1.167 | 1.167 | .000 | 1 | 1 | — | 0 | 0 | — |

KEY: ↑ Student had fewer failures in 1984-85

↓ Student had more failures in 1984-85

— No change in failures

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## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY STATEMENT

The results of this study are important to Central Point School District and may have broader implications for other school districts. The data indicates that the Promotion With Reservation phase of the new promotion/retention policy was effective where implemented. The data gathered indicates that the majority of students who had experienced a failure pattern were successful when repeating courses.

The idea of student accountability has become a focus of public concern in this community and the nation in the past two years. When implementing a policy of course repetition, it is essential that each student who fails be reappraised by an MDT group and that placement of students in special programs be an alternative to repeating required courses. This final review process is an additional benefit to the student and will assure a more successful implementation of the repetition policy.

The success rate of students in summer school was higher than that of students repeating courses during the regular school year. Therefore, it would seem that summer school is the best possible alternative for students who have failed two or more required courses. Specific reasons for a higher success rate in summer school could be 1) that it is remedial in nature, 2) that students set short range goals, 3) that grading periods are six weeks in length instead of 18 weeks, and 4)

that only two subjects are taken at one time, with instruction lasting two hours for each subject. Two advantages of successfully completing summer school are that the student takes all grade level courses at the same time and they have an opportunity to take electives of their choice the following year.

When looking at the aspect of placement of students in classes during the regular school year, there was little difference in the success rate of students who repeated courses with the same teacher and those who repeated with a different teacher. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that scheduling can be done through the regular computer sorting process and that, at this point, individual counseling and hand scheduling of courses to place students with specific teachers is not essential.

I believe that several factors not measured in this study may have influenced the success of students in the course repetition process. Parents have generally been in favor of the new policy and have been supportive towards the school. Peer pressure is evident; students do not like to sit in a class and repeat courses with younger students below their present grade level. Some teacners have recognized the failure patterns and, in the second year of the new program, have presented remedial lab courses with expectations and competency levels which are geared to low achievers. Finally, both parents and teachers have set an expectation level for the student saying in essence, "We believe you can pass that course". In response students have repeated courses and

the majority have passed successfully.

A study of this type should be continued over a period of several years to provide totally reliable evidence. It seems important to follow up on the students involved in this study to measure their success in terms of academic achievement and to chart their drop out rate as they move through high school. An additional study should also be made concerning the course repetition success of students in the next two to three years. It would be beneficial to include students arriving from Hanby Junior High who complete their ninth grade year at Scenic. With statistics based on several hundred students, results could be considered to be valid and reliable.

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APPENDIX

ACCOMODATING THE NEEDS OF

SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS WHO FAIL CLASSES

With the advent of new curriculum programs at the junior high level, as well as the replacement of the old three year graduation credit program with a four year plan, it became increasingly urgent that the District find a way to deal with the class failures of seventh and eighth graders. The following plan, devised by a team of junior high and district administrators, has been designed to meet the individual needs of students, as well as the concerns of the school.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

All student failures will be examined by persons responsible for the youngster. Reasons for the failure will be identified to assist in making decisions about the disposition of the case. In many cases, an MDT format will be used in making decisons.

The total student body of each seventh and eighth grade class in a school will divide itself into four groups as regards achievement and promotion.

1. Promotion With Commendation Students who achieve a grade point average of 3.5 or better would be promoted to the next grade level with commendation, noted both on the report card and in the form of a certificate.

2. Promotion With Approval Students below the 3.5 GPA who have passed all classes would be promoted with approval, and this would be noted on their report card.

3. Promotion With Reservation Students who fail one or more classes may be promoted with reservation. In these cases, individual decisons would be made regarding the status of the student. In some cases, where the number of classes failed is relatively low, the student may be required to make up required courses instead of taking electives. These decisions could be made by a designated member of the staff, after conferring with other appropriate staff members. In other cases, the student may be required to attend summer school. In still other cases, a combination of those two make-up avenues might be stipulated. It is possible in some cases, particularly in the event of failure of elective courses, the student would not be required to make up failures. In cases where more than two failed classes are involved, an MDT team would be convened to determine the causes of failure, to examine the test scores and skill level of the

student, to discuss the most appropriate educational plan for the student, and to make recommendations accordingly. Such teams would consist of a parent, an administrator, a counselor, the advisor, and appropriate teachers.

4. Retention In a few cases, it is possible that the maturity level and/or the skill level of the student may be low enough to warrent complete retention at a grade level. All such cases would involve the deliberations of an MDT team and final approval of the Principal. Students with a high failure rate who do not comply with the stipulations of the "Promotion With Reservation" might also be fully retained.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

SOME MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. It may be desirable, if feasible, to establish some make-up courses in the second semester of each year to ease the pressure on students who have failed first semester courses, and to make "promotion with reservations" more realistic.

2. Because of the short time between completion of final grades and the beginning of second semester or summer school, it would be highly desirable to involve teachers in an "early warning system" to insure due process and to allow appropriate scheduling for studetns.

3. It will be extremely important to develop a climate among all staff that decisions made about failing students be individual and based on the educational needs of the youngster rather than on the notion of punishment for failure.